

AVIATION COMMAND ASSIGNMENT--PROBLEMS AND PROCEDURES OF
PERSONNEL DETAILERS IN SELECTING NAVAL AVIATORS FOR
AVIATION COMMAND BILLETS

By

Eugene B. Berger
Commander, USN

Prepared for

Dr. A. Rex Johnson

Navy Graduate Comptrollership Program
The George Washington University
Washington, D. C.
May 1960

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
PREFACE	iv
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	111
INTRODUCTION	1
The Problem	
The Importance of Command	
Chapter	
I. BILLET ASSIGNMENT POLICY OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL PERSONNEL	5
Organization for Officer Detailing	
II. THE HUMP	13
Background Information	
Hump Legislation	
Effect of Hump on Command Opportunity	
III. DETAILERS' PROBLEMS	23
Maintaining Current Information	
Workload	
Attrited Officers	
Advanced Educational Requirements	
Special Interest Pressures	
Advance Notice of Orders	
IV. CURRENT PROCEDURES USED IN COMMAND SELECTION .	30
Grade Assignment Detail Officer	
Officer Placement Officer (Air Combat Placement Section)	
Commander Detail Officer (Sea Desk)	
Aviation Command Opportunity	
V. FITNESS REPORTS	40
VI. IMPLICATIONS, SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	44
Preselection	
Morale	
Post Graduate Education	
Attrited Officers	
Fitness Reports	
Command Board	
Summary	
Conclusions	
BIBLIOGRAPHY	52

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure	Page
1. Officer Distribution Division	11
2. Distribution of Unrestricted Line Officers	21
3. Aviation Shipboard Opportunity	22
4. Total Aviation Command Opportunity	22
5. Mixing Curve Blending Performance and Experience	36
6. Aviation Command Opportunity	38

PREFACE

The problem of selecting naval aviators to fleet aviation has always been a delicate and difficult task for personnel detailers in the Bureau of Naval Personnel. Certain new processes and criteria have been developed during the past few years to aid in the intelligent selection of aviators to command billets, and the purpose of this paper is to explore these processes and criteria to shed some understanding on the background information that makes this selection one of the most significant in personnel management.

Most of the information contained in this paper was obtained from reviews of official records and data and through personal interviews with officers assigned to Officer Distribution Division, Pers B1, of BUPERS. The writer is especially indebted to Captain E. H. English, USN, Grade Assignment Officer, for his helpfulness and for clearance arrangements to official information and to Commander F. C. Turner, USN, for his cooperation and assistance.

Prior to starting this paper, the writer was advised that certain information relating to the subject was considered private and would not be disclosed; in particular, that the specific weighting factors of the individual elements of performance and flying experience used in the selection process fell into this category and that the specific value of these weighting factors would not be made available. In spite of this limitation, the writer felt that the subject merited study from a personal viewpoint

because of the associated knowledge that could be gained and utilized in planning his own future career and private life, but what was more important, this study permitted a more intelligent, informed approach through a better insight into related areas, such as fitness reports and promotions, to counsel junior officers as to the more desirable course to steer towards a successful naval career.

It would be presumptuous for this writer on the basis of this study, to make extensive qualitative comments regarding the processes and criteria currently being used in the selection of personnel to aviation command billets. An evaluation study is now in process by BUPERS to test the validity of these processes and criteria. The primary purpose of this paper is to gain a better understanding and insight into a significant and substantial problem in personnel management which not only has direct personal implications but also affects the career planning of all naval aviators since the assignment to a command billet represents a major significant achievement in the career of the unrestricted line officer.

INTRODUCTION

The Problem

Simply stated, the daily problem facing detail officers in making assignments is the determination of a particular officer to a particular billet that is consonant with the needs of the service, the career needs of the officer, and the individual desire of the officer as to the type and location of his next duty assignment. The detailer must find and assign a particular officer who represents the optimum combination of operational experience and performance potential that meets the billet requirement. The procedures used to make this selection are discussed in detail in Chapter IV.

Many uncontrollable obstacles thwart the orderly flow of duty assignments as an officer reaches maturity in his career. Among these are the fluxing international scene, congressional action, appropriations, technological developments, the increasing cost of military hardware--all exert varying degrees of pressure on the organizational structure of the Navy and, of course, the billets within this structure.

Perhaps the most significant obstacle today for those naval aviators aspiring to an aviation command billet is the large number of aviators who are eligible for command in terms of rank and experience and the small number of commands that are available to be assigned. This condition exists primarily

because the "hump" officers, those who came into the Navy during World War II, have now reached the rank to be considered for command assignment while the number of commands has remained relatively stable over the years. The net result is that approximately 25-40 per cent of the naval aviators of year groups 1942 and 1943 will have a command opportunity as compared to 100 per cent for year groups 1940 and 1941, and 45 per cent for year groups 1944 and subsequent. The "hump" has accentuated the detailers' problems and the discussion in Chapter III should further illuminate the effect of the "hump" on current assignments.

The Importance of Command

During the course of a naval officer's career up to the time he is eligible for assignment to a command billet, he has been exposed to a myriad of duties and responsibilities ashore and afloat. He may have run the entire gamut from savings bond officer, division officer, department head, and executive officer in aviation assignments as well as serving in various capacities as a ship's officer. However, an officer of the line prepares himself for command from the time he accepts his commission through the performance of increasingly demanding duties as he advances in grade.

In most cases, when an officer has done his job well, he has received fitness reports that have permitted him to be promoted regularly in the past. He has made many personal judgments regarding the merit of his successive commanding officers, as they have made of him. He has observed what he

thinks are good practices and practices that are not good, and it is hoped that, consciously or unconsciously, he has emulated his superiors in the better practices. For the unrestricted line officer this formative and growth period can be looked upon as a training program directed towards fulfilling requirements for command eligibility. The naval officer who is career minded points and directs his efforts towards this objective.

Much faith is required to hew to the command theory today and to resist the urge to specialize, yet we certainly want to attract and to keep in our Navy a breed of young officers, each of whom enters the Navy with one confident thought--to aspire to supreme command. A young man who aims lower is less than the caliber we desire.¹

When an officer receives orders as a commanding officer he is understandingly pleased and excited with the prospects of being the "skipper" of his unit. Assignment as a commanding officer represents the fruition of a personal goal after many long, loyal, sacrificing years of hard work and preparation; and in many cases, assignment to a command billet represents the achievement of a psychological need for recognition.

Not only does a command assignment represent the achievement of a personal goal, but informed line officers have been aware of the close relationship between command and promotion. For example, a review of the promotion results for fiscal year 1959 shows:

¹William P. Mack, Captain, USN, "The Exercise of Broad Command: Still the Navy's Top Specialty," United States Naval Institute Proceedings, April, 1957, p. 374.

SELECTION RESULTS FY - 1959

(Year Groups 40 and 41, CDR to CAPT)

1. Selection opportunity of aviators with patrol squadron (VP) background . . . 37%
2. Percentage selected of eligible VP aviators who had an aviation command and a shipboard billet as department head or executive officer 40%
3. Selection opportunity of aviators with carrier aviation background 53%
4. Percentage selected of eligible carrier aviators who had an aviation command and a shipboard billet as department head or executive officer . . . 60%

In a recent study on the desirability and criteria of early promotion of naval officers, one of the conclusions was:

Selection criteria for early or deep promotion must be the same as for other promotions. For example, in the unrestricted line--performance in demanding assignments, particularly in command, and a diversified career pattern.²

Having introduced the subject of this paper, the attention of the reader is invited to the following chapters which attempt to provide a background to better appreciate the framework within which the detail officers operate, and specifically an insight into the procedures and the criteria that the detailers use in the current selection of aviators to aviation command billets.

²U. S. Department of the Navy, OPNAV/BUPERS, Desirability and Criteria for Early Promotion of Naval Officers, OPNAV/BUPERS Personnel Monitoring Group, December 1958, p. 36.

CHAPTER I

BILLET ASSIGNMENT POLICY OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL PERSONNEL

The billet assignment of all naval officers is highly centralized in the Washington area and is the direct responsibility of the Bureau of Naval Personnel. Information and directives on which overall personnel policy is based in the Navy come to BuPers through the Under-Secretary of the Navy, who is advised and assisted by both the Chief of Naval Operations and the Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Personnel and Reserve Forces).¹ The fact that the Deputy Chief of Naval Operations, Personnel, and the Chief of the Bureau of Naval Personnel is the same officer wearing two hats goes a long way toward insuring that only one personnel policy exists in the Navy.²

Essentially the policy of the Navy in assigning officers has long been based on the following three broad fundamentals:

- a. The needs of the service,
- b. The career needs of the officer,
- c. The officers' personal desires.

¹Howard E. Porter, Lt. Colonel, USA, "An Analysis of Officer Career Management in the Armed Forces" (Thesis No. 102, Industrial College of the Armed Forces, Washington, D. C., 1956-1957), p. 26.

²Ibid.

It is the responsibility of the detailers to carry out this policy and follow the fundamental criteria in the order given.

The concept of the "needs of the service" is a flexible policy that cannot be completely divorced from the "career needs" of the individual officer, and in most cases they are mutually supporting; i.e., what is good for the Navy is good for the individual's career. Both concepts are geared to the premise of maintaining the Navy at the highest possible level of effective combat readiness.

From a personnel standpoint, maintaining the highest possible level of combat readiness is largely dependent on the experience, training, and achievements of personnel assigned to particular billets; one of the most significant assignments being that of commanding officer of a fleet unit. In essence the pattern of a recommended career pattern is directed towards the development of naval officers who are better equipped to perform the duties required to maintain the Navy at its highest readiness potential.

The Navy has seven tenets of career planning and its system of career management is built around these ideas:

- a. Varied duty assignment in functional areas
- b. Experience in all ship/aircraft types
- c. Progressively increased responsibilities
- d. Evaluation of performance
- e. Sea and shore rotation³
- f. Assignment to joint, combined, SecDef staffs.⁴

³Ibid., pp. 29, 30.

⁴U. S. Department of the Navy, BUPERS Notice 1412 of 3 March 1960.

When detailers are in the process of considering and selecting officers for specific billets, they are influenced by the above tenets, and assignments are made on the basis of permitting an officer to gain as much experience as closely allied to the above tenets as is possible.

Regarding the personal desires of an officer, the Navy considers that each officer has a major share in the planning of his career. He has primary responsibility for his own professional competence, performance record, qualities of leadership, military character and for making known the types of duty that best suit his desires and qualifications.⁵ The desire of an officer is made known to the detailer by the annual submission of the Officer Preference and History Supplement Card--NavPers 765 A (New 5-57). Even though sometimes the desires of the individual run contrary to the accepted career pattern, the individual's desires are considered in making an assignment. The career patterns of line officers are firmly outlined, and any deviation from the program for personal convenience works to the ultimate disadvantage of the officer aspiring to a successful naval career.

During the past few years there has been a growing concern about the future of the line officer. Vice Admiral H. P. Smith, USN, the Chief of Naval Personnel in January 1960 sought to mollify this concern by writing:

⁵United States Department of the Navy, BuPers, Officers Appraisal Pamphlet for Surface Line Officers, 1 Oct. 1955, p. 22.

I would like to redefine the basic concept of the line officer, discuss his qualification and his place in the Navy's officer personnel structure. Then I will discuss what his prospective duties may be, career patterns and personnel practices and how they support the basic concept,

. . . The line officer's primary duty remains to fit himself with experience and education to manage, direct and coordinate the vastly complex operations of combined land, sea and air forces. His requirement for knowledge is limitless; his work complex and vital; his reward, the authority to make ultimate decisions and to bear the responsibility for them.

. . . The basic career pattern of the line officer is well known. While it may appear, to some, to be static, in reality it is constantly changing under the impact of present requirements and future developments. Personnel practices lead the individual through the various phases of professional development. It should be clear that in each phase there are many assignments of approximately the same level of responsibility which develop approximately the same talents. Performance is the common denominator. Certain types of duty have proven to be excellent testing and training grounds for the assumption of higher levels of responsibility. Commands at sea, tours in senior service colleges or at the seat of government are highly esteemed. They are not absolute prerequisites to selection for high command. The professionalism required can be proven in many other assignments.

. . . Personnel practices take full cognizance of the line officer's mission. They are designed to prepare him, and to give him the opportunity to prepare himself, for command. Duty assignments can assist in broadening an officer's professional background, but they cannot do the job alone. They provide an officer with experience and permit him to perform. . . .⁶

These statements of Admiral Smith do not reflect a change in policy, career management or billet assignment on the part of the Bureau of Naval Personnel. Rather, these statements are a clear cut exposition of the underlying principles and philosophies of BuPers that are reflected in the assignment of

⁶H. P. Smith, Vice Admiral, USN, Line Officer Personnel Newsletter, U. S. Department of the Navy, BuPers, Vol. 3, No. 2, January 1960.

officers. The truly broad naval officer has command as his principal professional goal; the detailer's job is to provide the opportunity for command to as many eligible and qualified officers as is possible.

Organization for Officer Detailing

The Officer Distribution Division is the organizational division of the Bureau of Naval Personnel which has cognizance of officer assignments within the Navy up to and including the grade of captain. In addition, this Division administers policies and programs governing duty assignments of active naval personnel, both regular and reserve; selection and appointments to officer training schools; development of career patterns; development of special programs to promote the general efficiency of officer personnel. The Division further advises the Chief of Naval Personnel of the best methods to promote maximum utilization of officer personnel; provides current information to promote augmentation and retention of naval officers; and provides planning to allow maximum flexibility in the assignment of officer personnel to support personnel expansion in the event of mobilization.

On 1 January 1959 all unrestricted line officer detailing was organizationally gathered into this Division. The result of this reorganization has been a greater understanding of personnel needs, problems, and ideas. Additionally, the grade/placement system of detailing, formerly in effect only for surface line officers, is now in use for the entire

unrestricted line.⁷

As can be seen from the organization chart (Fig. 1), within this Division are two main branches: (1) the Grade Assignment Branch, and (2) the Officer Placement Branch. Basically, the Grade Assignment Branch is concerned with people; the Officer Placement Branch is concerned with activities such as large combatants, air combat units, submarines, shore establishment activities, etc. These two branches coordinate their efforts to select a particular officer for a particular billet.

The mission of the Grade Assignment Officer is the assignment of individual officers in accordance with service requirements but with consideration for the officer's professional career and his personal desires. To do this the Grade Assignment Officer maintains records of the qualifications, request, previous duties, and tour dates of all officers of the rank assigned to his desk. . . . Continuous liaison with all Placement Desks informs the Grade Assignment Officer of current and prospective needs for officers of the grade for which his desk is responsible. Thus, he is aware of both the requirements of the various programs and the officers available to meet them.

To fill a particular billet he applies the detailer's triad (needs of the service, career needs of the officer, personal desires of the officer) to a number of officers whose tour dates indicate they will be available for transfer at the required time. Using his good judgment he selects the officer who best fulfills the criteria stated above, and nominates him to the Placement Officer who has cognizance of the billet.

The mission of the Placement Officer is to insure that authorized billets in his activities are filled with properly qualified officers. To do this he must be cognizant not only of activity allowances but of the duties involved in each billet. Close liaison with individual activities and major commands insures knowledge of changing requirements, new problems, and special situations.

⁷U. S. Department of the Navy, BUPERS, Line Officer Personnel Newsletter, NAVPERS 18892, Vol. 3, No. 2, January 1960, p. 10.

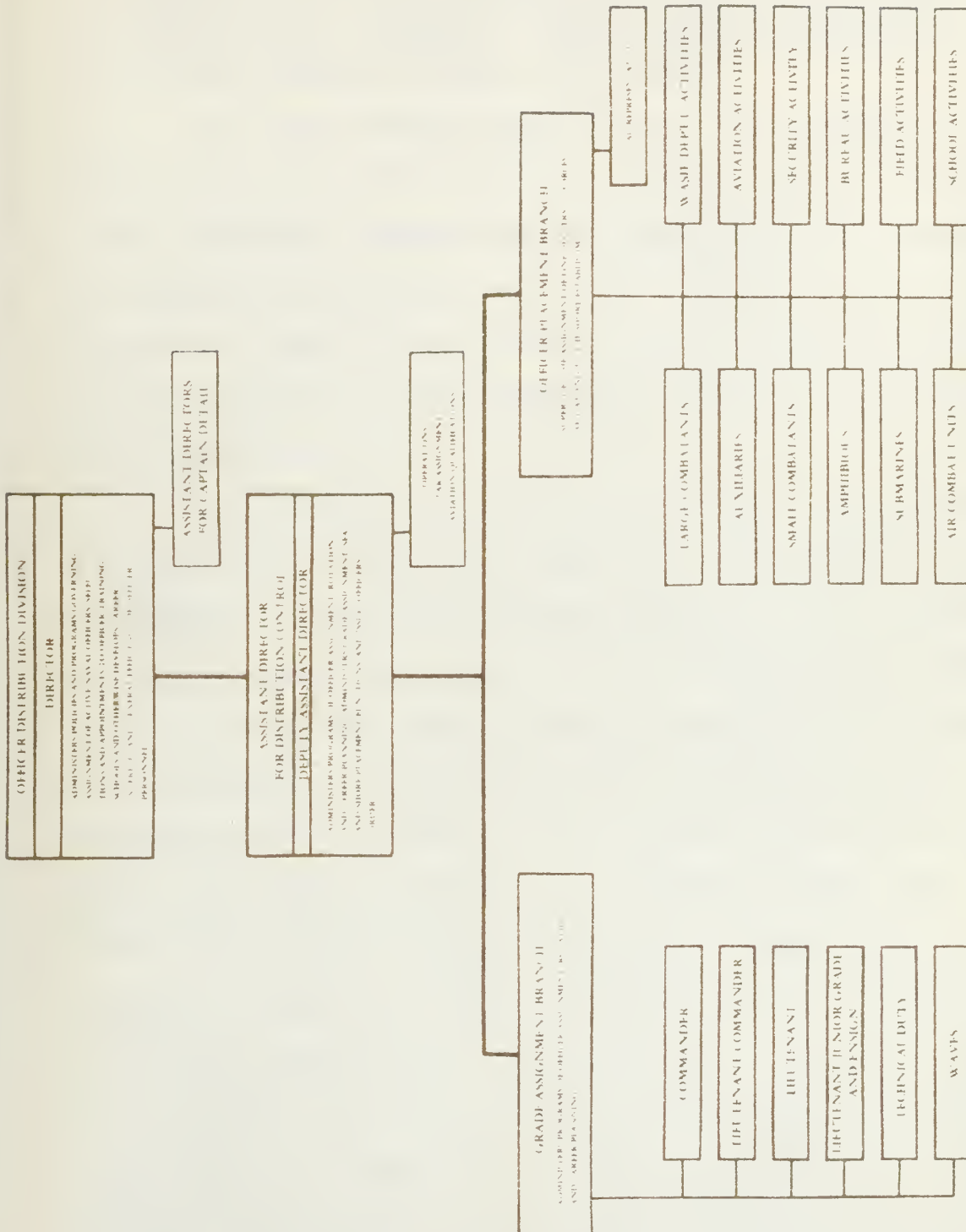


FIGURE 1

Upon receiving a nomination for an officer to fill a particular billet, the Placement Officer, with the specific billet requirements in mind, reviews the individual's qualifications and studies his Fitness Reports for a concise picture of the individual's professional abilities. If considered qualified, he is then ordered to fill the billet.⁸

The above billet descriptions of the missions of the Grade Assignment Officer and the Officer Placement Officer offer a valuable insight into the mechanics as to how most of the personnel assignments are made. As will be seen later in this paper, when aviation officers of the grade of commander are being considered for assignment, there is some deviation from this procedure.

The assignment of an officer is not a routine affair--it is a difficult task that requires a great deal of insight, knowledge, planning, and an appreciation of the principles of personnel management. The success or failure of an officer, in terms of promotion, can be largely dependent on the pattern of duty assignments he has experienced during his career. The assignment of an officer to a particular billet that is commensurate with his rank usually is dependent on the types of assignments that he previously has had and the manner in which he has performed. As the capable officer advances in rank his assignments involve more responsibility. Rank and responsibility are synonymous, and the detailer and the officer exercise joint responsibility to see that the type of assignments lead to the ultimate professional growth of the officer.

⁸U. S. Department of the Navy, BUPERS, Line Officer Personnel Newsletter, NAVPERS 18892, Vol. 1, No. 3, February 1957, p. 16.

CHAPTER II

THE HUMP

Probably the most important factor affecting the detailing of officers to command billets is that the officers who are eligible are part of the "hump." In fact those officers who are being considered today and who will be considered during the next few years make up that portion of the commissioned officer population that is exclusively within the "hump" year groups.

In order to have a better understanding of the effect the "hump" has in the selection for command, it appears profitable to review some background information as to what the "hump" is, "hump" legislation, and the effect of the "hump" on command opportunity.

Background Information

What is the "hump?" Essentially it is a specific group of officers who were originally commissioned, either in a regular or reserve status, during World War II. It is comprised of officers of year groups '42, '43, '44, and '45. One third of the regular line officer of the Navy and Marine Corps are in the "hump", and in normal times the number of officers now spread over four year groups would normally spread over

thirteen.¹

After the cessation of the War it was apparent that the vastly enlarged Navy required augmentation in order to remain effective. Since the only available, immediate source for commissioned officers was the reserve officer on active duty, a source unusually rich in experience, a concerted effort was made at the close of the War to recruit these officers into the regular Navy. During the period 1946-7, 14,920 officers received regular commissions, the major portion of whom were in the "hump" year groups.² Ideally the augmentation of the regular Navy should have taken place from a wider span of ages, ranks, and seniority, but the pyramid of rank structure was already filled with officers who had been promoted to responsible grades to meet war needs.³

Most of the augmented officers were lieutenants and lieutenants junior grade; today these same officers are commanders and lieutenant commanders. At the time of augmentation this group was not readily identifiable as a problem that would reach the proportions that it did in later years. Had there been no Cold War, no Korea, no international tensions, it might have been possible to arrange an orderly attrition. Because of the unpredictable international scene, changing administrations, congressional legislation, unpredictable events, personnel planners have had little latitude to operate

¹E. R. Zumwalt, Jr., Commander USN, "Beyond the Hump," United States Naval Institute Proceedings, July 1959, p. 60.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

in resolving the imbalance the "hump" officers represent in the commissioned officers' structure of the Navy.

Hump Legislation (Public Law 86-155)

As the "hump" approached the area of promotion to commander and captain, personnel planners of the Navy recognized that unless some relief was granted, abnormal attrition would be invoked against this group of officers and professional growth would be denied to officers junior to the "hump." Admiral Burke, the Chief of Naval Operations, describes the legislation as:

. . . The "hump" legislation enacted by the last Congress was born of necessity. It is an attempt to provide a reasonable promotion for these junior people--[those officers junior to the "hump"] at the same time preventing an unacceptably harsh attrition among officers of the World War II group.⁴

The crux of the situation was that the Officer Personnel Act of 1947 contained provisions that unrestricted line captains were not required to be retired until they had completed 30 years of service and were twice passed over for selection to flag rank, and commanders were not required to retire until they had completed 26 years and had been twice passed over for selection to captain.⁵ Because of these provisions, and because of accelerated promotion of officers senior to the "hump" without appreciable attrition thereby filling the upper rank structure,

⁴Arleigh Burke, Admiral, USN, "News and Views," CNO Shop Talk, Department of the Navy, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, 28 March 1960, p. 2.

⁵U. S. Congress, Officer Personnel Act 1947, Public Law 381, 80th Congress, Aug. 11, 1947.

and because the actual numbers of officers in each rank is limited by statute (OPA), the promotion picture for "hump" officers to the rank of captain and commander was a dismal one. Legislative relief was sought from Congress by the Navy to remedy this inequity and to insure a more orderly flow of promotions.

In a pamphlet "To All Naval Officers," Vice Admiral H. P. Smith, the Chief of Naval Personnel, describes the final legislation, Public Law 86-155, and the plan of implementation. In effect what the law accomplished was to force the early retirement of commanders and captains before they had reached the time limit of 26 and 30 years of service that were provisions of the Officer Personnel Act of 1947 thereby forcing vacancies in the upper grade structures. The vehicle through which early retirement is forced is the "continuation board."

Captains

The Secretary is authorized to convene selection boards for the purpose of recommending captains for continuation on the active list, or alternatively, to direct selection boards convened for promotion, to recommend captains for continuation on the active list.

Captains may be considered for continuation in their fifth or later year in grade. . . .

.

Commanders

The Secretary is required to convene selection boards, or to direct selection boards convened for promotion, to recommend, among commanders who have failed two or more times of selection to captain, officers for continuation on the active list. Officers so recommended in the approved report of a board would not be subject to forced retirement until the completion of 26 years of total commissioned service, and would not be subject to later continuation boards.⁶

⁶U. S. Department of the Navy, BuPers, To All Naval Officers, 12 August 1959, p. 3.

The net effect of "hump" legislation is that approximately 35 per cent of USN captains will be retired short of 30 years service and that in fiscal year 1960 only 33 per cent of the twice passed over commanders will be continued; after 1960, the planned continuation percentage is 45 per cent.⁷

As a result of this legislation some senior officers who have been promoted early and without appreciable attrition will be retired early to make vacancies for about one-half instead of one-quarter of the "hump" officers.⁸ How each year group in the "hump" will fare is illustrated below:

<u>Year Group</u>	<u>Fiscal Year Considered</u>	<u>To the Grade of</u>	<u>Years of Service</u>	<u>Attrition</u>
1942-1	1960	CAPT	18	55%
1942-2	1961	"	19	"
1942-3	1962	"	20	"
1943-1	1963	"	20	"
1943-2	1964	"	21	"
1944-1	1964	"	20	"
1944-2	1964	"	20	"
1944-3	1960	CDR	16	"
1945-1	1960	"	15	"
1945-2	1961	"	16	" ⁹

In summary it can be said that "hump" legislation doubled the promotion opportunity of the "hump" officers through the forced early retirement of pre-"hump" officers. Attrition rates have been equalized but they are still far in excess of that planned for in the Officer Promotion Act of 1947 which envisioned an estimated attrition rate of 26 per cent to lieutenant, 25 per cent to lieutenant commander, 35 per cent

⁷Ibid., p. 5.

⁸Zumwalt, op. cit., p. 63.

⁹To All Naval Officers, op. cit., p. 6.

to commander, and 26 per cent to captain. The vacancies made by the forced early retirement of some senior officers offer additional incentive to the "hump" officer as well as prevent demoralizing stagnation of the post "hump" group of officers, by providing more responsible billets, as they await their turn to be considered for promotion.

Effect of the Hump on Command Opportunity

In the two preceding sections an attempt was made to familiarize the reader with some background information on the characteristics of the "hump" and what has been accomplished legislatively to resolve some of the problems that have arisen. The reason this familiarity is thought necessary is because those naval aviators who are being considered for aviation command billets today, and who will be considered in the immediate future, stem from the heart of the "hump" group.

As the "hump" officer moved through the ranks of lieutenant and lieutenant commander it was not too difficult for detailers to assign them to aviation billets since in most cases rank was not a restrictive factor in their assignment. It was not uncommon in the past for as many as 50 per cent of a squadron's pilots to be in the "hump" year groups. But today this is impossible. The bulk of the "hump" is currently in the grade of commander, and the majority of aviation commands can accommodate only one or two officers of commander rank. The net result is that there are far more commanders available for assignment to an aviation command than there are commands available to be assigned. There are approximately 3,200

commanders on active duty and an average yearly turnover of about 124 aviation commands. Obviously, competition for a command billet is extremely keen, and it has been the detailer's difficult problem to act as judge and select the most capable of those eligible for command billets.

Because of the dearth of command billets and the overabundance of eligible aviators to these particular billets, the command opportunity for different year groups has varied. This variance is graphically shown in Fig. 4. The pre-"hump" aviator enjoyed a 100 per cent opportunity as compared to 25 per cent opportunity for year group 43-1. As the officers in the van of the "hump" become more senior, they will drop out of contention for an aviation command assignment. (See Fig. 6). Competition, however, will remain keen since the command opportunity in the future will be less than 50 per cent.

Another point when considering the effects of the "hump" is that though the "hump" legislation has increased the promotion opportunity for "hump" officers, it has not enhanced their command opportunity. By the time a commander becomes eligible for promotion to captain he is too senior to be in competition for an aviation command billet; consequently the forced early retirement of the twice passed-over commander has no effect on command opportunity.

Competition by commander aviators is not limited exclusively to command billets. Fig. 3 illustrates the limited opportunity for an aviator for a shipboard billet. Exactly the same reason why this condition exists applies to shipboard

billets as applies to command billets--too many eligible people in relation to the available billets.

In view of the statistics of promotion results referred to in the Introduction, and in the light of the discussion in this chapter, it becomes increasingly obvious that only the more highly qualified officers will be assigned to shipboard duties and command billets--and these are the significant assignments for promotion. Further, assignment to these billets may serve to create a cleavage amongst the "hump" officers between those selected for these billets and those who are not. Only time will tell how deep and serious this cleavage could become.

Distribution of Unrestricted Line Officers By Designator, Grade, and Year Group



FIGURE 2

Aviation Shipboard Billet Opportunity



Figure 3

Total Aviation Command Opportunity

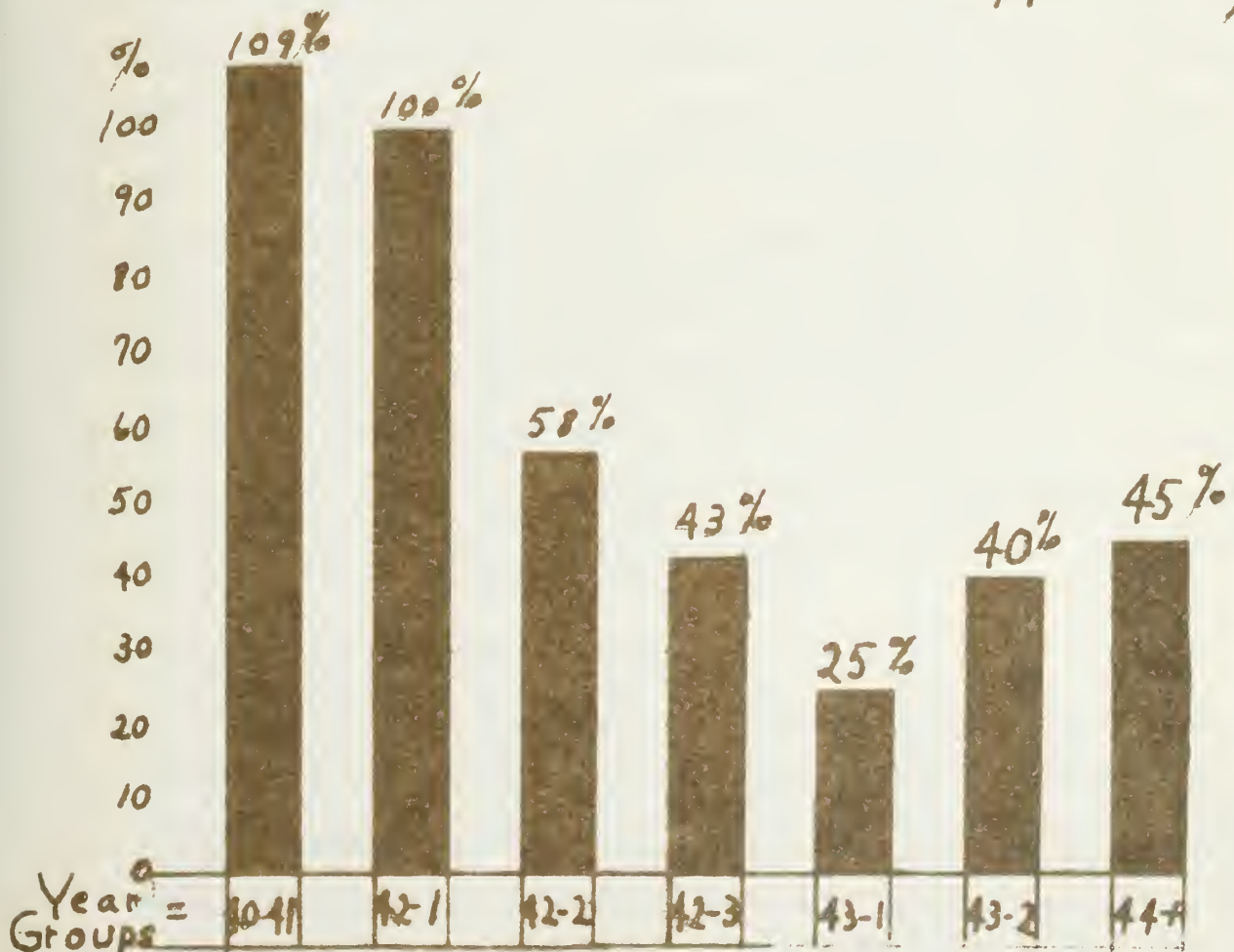


Figure 4

CHAPTER III

DETAILERS' PROBLEMS

The problems of detail officers are much the same in many respects as other officers performing administrative duties; yet, in other respects, the decisions they make have more impact and are accentuated because the product with which they work is people. It is impossible for any one detailer to know personally any more than a small percentage of the officers for whom he has responsibility for assignment. Pre-World War II the number of naval officers on active duty, (about 7,000), was such that it was possible to know most of them either personally or professionally. Today the size of the Navy precludes this knowledge, and so the detailer must rely on several types of official records to assist him in making a selection for an assignment. The following remarks are not inclusive of all the detailers' problems but highlights those that are of particular significance.

Maintaining Current Information

As has been mentioned before, the detailer and the individual officer share responsibility for an assignment. The officer must keep the detail officer informed as to his personal desires, new qualifications, and new current data. Only when the detailer has this current information can he properly

execute his responsibilities, and lacking this information, the detailee is forced to work in a vacuum that may lead to an erroneous decision or a decision that is undesirable from the viewpoint of the individual officer. Officers are constantly being urged to keep their records up-to-date, particularly their preference cards.

Large numbers of preference cards of commanders due to rotate within the next several months do not reflect realistically their current desires. This is important because planning for the next duties of most commanders commences from about 4 to 12 months prior to the prospective rotation date and without your current thinking, the assignment officer is forced to try to relate your preference of sometimes past to the situation at hand.¹

This may be old saw, but detailers are still working with many officer preference cards which are out of date, incomplete, or marked "no change". . . . Did you know that:

Your dependent status, wife and number and age of children;
 Your current billet;
 Your office and home phone numbers;
 Your pilot hours and type of aircraft flown;
 Your preference for duty and amplifying records;
 and every other piece of information on the Officer Preference Card--NAVPERS 765 is or may be used while determining your next assignment.²

From the foregoing it is obvious that one major problem of detailers has been to get, and keep current, information from the officers they are responsible for assigning. In the spring of 1960 BUPERS inaugurated the machine produced Officer Data Card, NAVPERS 2626, and will rely in the future on data

¹U. S. Department of the Navy, BuPers, NAVPERS 15892, Line Officer Personnel Newsletter, Vol. 3, No. 1, Oct. 1959, p. 8.

²Ibid., p. 15.

processing equipment for updating and maintaining current supplemental information.

Personal Conferences

Traditionally officer detailers have been receptive to personal visits to their offices of individual officers who are being considered for orders. Most officers who visit do so in a constructive manner. They come in to give, and receive, information concerning themselves and their next duty assignments with the full understanding that their personal presence does not guarantee preferential treatment.³ For those officers who believe that they can personally "shop" for a billet, the Chief of Naval Personnel as a matter of policy requires that every officer receives equal consideration for assignment in accordance with his own request regardless of personal visits.⁴

These personal visits though informative and a highly desirable feature to be maintained because of the counselling features, nevertheless, are time-consuming and preclude the detailers from accomplishing much work during normal working hours. In the many trips this writer has made to BuPers while gathering material for this paper, rarely has he failed to observe the sea duty detail officer for commanders in conference with a visiting officer, and usually there were one or two officers awaiting their turn for a conference. The net result of this "open door" policy has been that a detailer's work is never done. Because many of his normal working hours are

³Ibid., Vol. 3, No. 2, January 1960, p. 18.

⁴Ibid.

devoted to conferences, he must of necessity accomplish much of his assigned work outside working hours--and this is a pattern that is not likely to change in view of the daily deadline decisions that must be made.

Workload

Still another problem is that there are relatively few officers assigned as detail officers which results in a heavy work load for each individual detailee. For example, in the aviator commander detail desk only three officers are assigned, and one of these is collaterally assigned as Head of the Grade Assignment Branch. One is assigned shore duty billets and one sea duty billets. These three officers are responsible for the assignment of approximately 3,200 commander naval aviators now on active duty. It is estimated that on the average 200 orders per month are written on commanders being assigned.

Attrited Officers

With the unusually large attrition rates in promotion these past few years, detailers are faced with an additional limitation when assigning "passed-over" officers. Currently there are 3,700 officers on active duty largely in the grade of lieutenant commander and commander, who have had at least one pass-over. It has been common practice not to assign a passed-over officer to certain duties such as aides, certain fleet aviation squadrons, command billets, and many prestige billets ashore. During the immediate future this particular problem will become increasingly complex because of projected continued heavy

promotion attrition unless the stigma of "pass-over" is removed and there is a reorientation in the acceptance of passed-over officers.

Advanced Educational Requirements

The accelerated rate of technological developments has resulted in an increased demand for line officers with advanced specialized educational backgrounds. For example, it is estimated that 60 per cent of the personnel assigned to the Polaris program ashore should have post graduate work in specific fields. In the next two years, the planned input into the post graduate programs should double from the present 600 to 1295 in 1962. Without any officer personnel increases or lessened commitments envisioned for the immediate future, detailers will be hard pressed to fill those billets vacated by officers ordered to educational institutions. In addition, detailers will have to fill billets vacated by some 600 officers who will not be continued on active duty in 1961 as a result of continuation board action.

Special Interest Pressure

Another problem, and rather a delicate one, is the handling of pressure brought to bear on the detailer for preferential treatment by specially interested persons for assignment of a particular officer to a specified billet. An illustrative example is the senior officer who desires to have a particular officer assigned to his command, or who intervenes with the detailer on behalf of an officer who had previously

been assigned to his command. Friendships and personal loyalties that have developed through relations in a common assignment in the Navy are usually not casual. Instead many are long-lived, sincere relationships, and it is well within the realm of human understanding to recognize why pressure of this type exists. Resisting this pressure, whether it be from a senior officer, a congressional inquiry, or other specially interested party, if it is not in the best interests of the Navy and if it is not consistent with approved personnel policies and procedures, requires all the ability, tact, and diplomacy that a detailer can muster.

Advance Notice of Orders

Whenever possible, change of duty orders are delivered to an officer well in advance of the date of detachment. This advance notice may vary anywhere from one to six months. This lead time is highly desirable from the viewpoint of the officer because it allows him sufficient time to plan many of his personal affairs such as selling his home, schooling arrangements for his children, arrangements for housing at his next duty station, etc. This long lead time, however, creates another problem for the detailers.

Since there is a time lag between receipt and execution of orders, many officers employ this time attempting to affect a change of orders. Consequently, the detailer must spend additional time and effort on work that has been already completed. This is not to say that it is common practice for

orders to be changed at the request of an officer after they have been received. Orders are usually firm once written, but detailers do not turn a deaf ear to reasonable requests for a change. What constitutes a reasonable request may be interpreted differently by the detailer than by the requesting officer. For example, many officers would prefer that their detachment date coincide with the school calendar of their children and request that their orders be changed so that detachment will occur during the summer. Because a wholesale change in personnel during the summer months would affect the operational readiness of fleet units during this period, the policy of the Chief of Naval Personnel is to disapprove all requests in rotation dates which are based on the opening and closing dates of schools even though a request of this type is reasonable and understandable.⁵

The problems discussed in the previous paragraphs, naturally, are not entirely inclusive but represent those that are common to most of the detail officers and some that are particularly significant to some. The assignment of an officer to an aviation command billet poses additional problems and procedures which are discussed in the following chapter.

⁵U. S. Department of the Navy, BUPERS, Line Officer Personnel Newsletter, NAVPERS 15892, Vol. 2, No. 4, July 1959, p. 7.

CHAPTER IV

CURRENT PROCEDURES USED IN COMMAND SELECTION

The current procedures utilized in the assignment of officers by the grade/placement branches follows a logical pattern which is not necessarily complex and involves a minimum number of personnel. Responsibilities of each branch are clearly established, and each branch performs an independent sub-function that leads to an eventual assignment. It is here that the publicized policies and philosophies governing assignments are applied, i.e., the needs of the service, career needs, and personal desires.

Because this paper is biased towards the assignment to command billets, a detailed explanation of how a particular officer ordered as a commanding officer of a fleet aviation command follows as an exposition is made of each detailer's action in the process.

Grade Assignment Officer

The Grade Assignment Officer initiates the chain of events that leads to an assignment by screening the cards that officers have submitted, i.e., the Officer History Card, NAVPERS 765, and the Officer Preference and History Supplement Card, NAVPERS 765 A. The lead time involved is from six to twelve months in advance of the projected rotation data of each

individual officer.

During the screening operation the Grade Assignment Officer is primarily concerned with the "career needs" of the officer being considered. He will evaluate the information on the cards and will decide in order of preference the types of duty that should be assigned that are consonant with the recommended career pattern.

The following points, which are readily available on the cards, are considered, in order, prior to making a decision:

- a) Designator
- b) Education (Civilian and Military)
- c) Year group
 - (1) Eligibility for commanding officer assignment (Fig. 6)
 - (2) Eligibility for department head aboard ship (Fig. 6)
 - (3) Time of eligibility for promotion to captain (Fig. 6)
- d) Present assignment
- e) Length of present tour, sea or shore
- f) Length of previous tours sea and shore
- g) Previous duties--including gaps and needs
- h) Length of overseas tours
- i) Dependents
- j) Personal desires (motivation inferred)
- k) Aviation qualifications

Evaluating these items constitutes the initial screen

and a unilateral decision is then made by the Grade Assignment Officer as to the type of duty to be assigned, but he makes no assignment to a particular billet. For example, he will decide whether the officer is to be sent to sea duty or shore duty. If the officer is to be sent to shore duty, the Grade Assignment Officer might indicate on the card an officer might be a good prospect for Navy Department duty or a specific talent that should be considered. If the officer is to be sent to sea, he would indicate in order of assignment preference whether the officer is to be further screened for assignment to a billet as (a) commanding officer; or assigned as (b) ship's officer, (c) staff, (d) overseas, and (e) joint staff.

The cards are then passed to the appropriate assignment desk, that is, either the commander shore duty desk or the commander sea duty desk after entry has been made in the Calendar Book. The Calendar Book is a control feature that lists the names of all officers who have been screened and permits a check to insure that there will be a follow-up on all officers who have been screened.

The procedures described complete that part which the commander Grade Assignment Officer plays in the assignment of an officer. There are two points that should be emphasized: (a) that his perspective is primarily from the viewpoint of the career needs of the officer and secondarily from the personal desires of the officer; and though his is a major decision, he makes no specific assignment to any particular billet--the specific assignment is made by the commander detail

officers (sea or shore) who next consider the individual cards; and (b) it is the Grade Assignment Officer's decision that earmarks an officer for further screening for assignment to a command billet.

Officer Placement Officer (Air Combat Placement Section)

The Air Combat Placement Officers' responsibility is to insure that the aviation operating units of the fleet are properly manned. There are three officers assigned to this section--one for attack assignments, one for ASW/AEW assignments, one for VR assignments. Their part in the assignment process reflect the "needs of the service" perspective. It is therefore necessary that a close working relationship be maintained by the Placement branch and the personnel division of the fleet type commanders, e.g. Commander Naval Air Forces, Atlantic, and Commander Naval Air Forces, Pacific.

Working on a lead time of 6-12 months, the type commanders generate their personnel requirements by rank for prospective commanding officer and for officers to be assigned to specific programs, i.e., the number of commanders to be assigned to patrol squadrons, the number of lieutenant commanders for fighter squadrons, the number of lieutenants for early-warning squadrons, etc. When these requirements are made known, they are reviewed and consolidated by the Air Combat Placement Section and then these requirements are posted with the various rank desks in the Grade Assignment Branch. Though postings are scheduled and made twice a year, there are many developments and special situations that keep these two branches working daily in

close harmony.

The placement branch is also charged with the responsibility for the schooling, timing and lineal fit of all orders being written; and it is in this branch that a last look is taken at fitness reports, particularly the latest reports to see if some late development might have been overlooked, before actual orders are written on an officer who has been selected for an assignment.

Commander Detail Officer (Sea Desk)

It is the responsibility of the commander detail (sea desk) to match "the needs of the service" requirements, which have been posted with him by the Placement Branch, with an officer who has been tentatively earmarked for a particular type of duty by the first screening process that was done by the Grade Assignment Officer.

The cards of all commanders who are to be considered for commanding officer billets have been so designated by the Grade Assignment Officer and are then subjected to further screening. This screen is made by the commander detailer (sea duty) and consists of a careful analysis of the aviation experience and the past performance of the prospective selectee. As was mentioned in the Preface, the exact weight factors that apply to each element of experience and performance are considered private information by BuPers and were not divulged. However, the nature of these elements was made known. As far as performance is concerned, a score is obtained through examination of the individual sections of an officer's

fitness reports. The elements comprising operational aviation experience when being considered for an aviation command are:

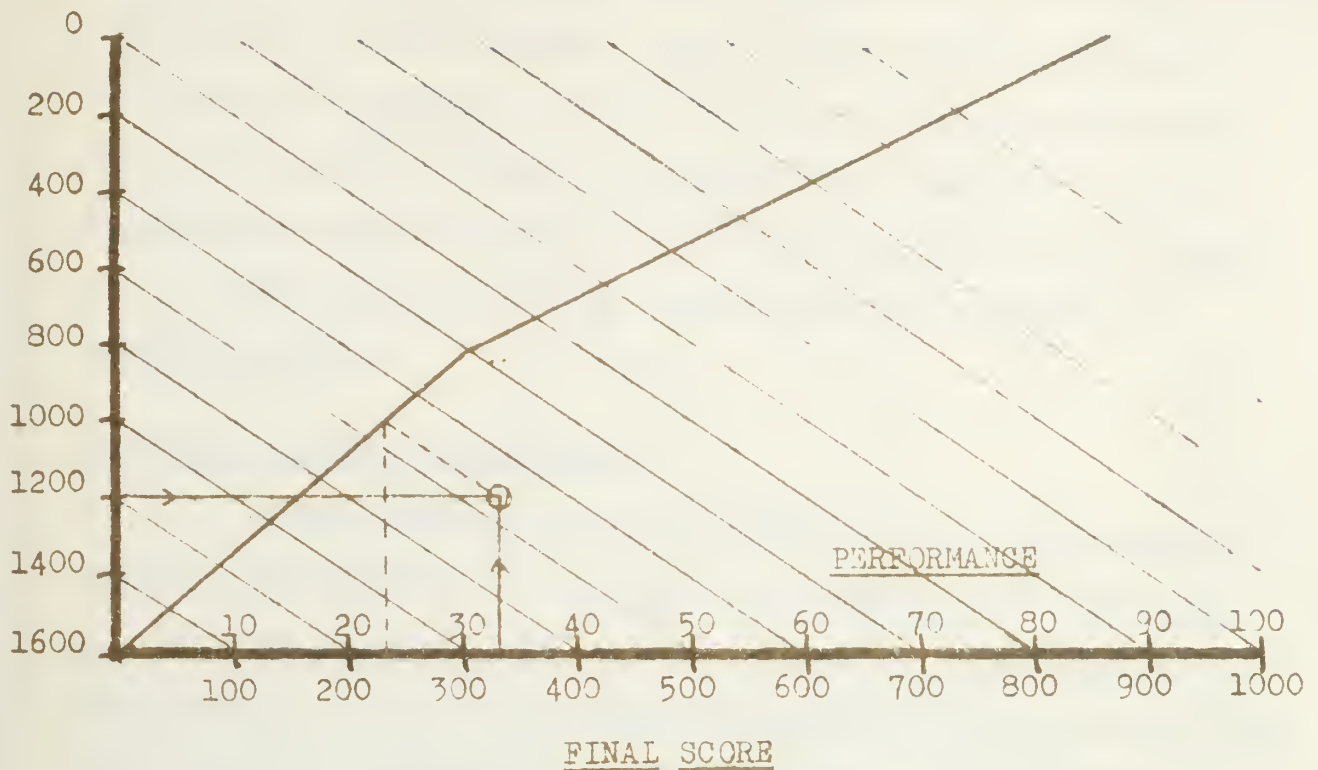
- a) Total flight time
- b) Recent flight time (last five years)
- c) Instrument qualification
- d) Total months at sea in squadrons
- e) Total months at sea in ships and other activities
- f) Total jet hours*
- g) Total carrier landings*

Using the scores obtained through this valuation screen for performance and experience, the detailer plots them on a mixing curve (Figure 5) to arrive at a final score. The next step is to rank all the scores that have been computed for all commanders considered during the posting period (every six months). The upper portion of this ranking distribution is destined to become what is known as the "command list."

Since the number of commands is known to the detailer, through the posting of the Air Combat Unit Placement Section, the number of commanders on the "command list" varies and is dependent on the number of commands that will become available for assignment during the posting period. On the basis of the number of commands that will be available, a cut-off point is established on the ranking distribution list. Those officers above the cut-off point will be considered eligible for a command and constitute the "command list." Those below the cut-off point will be assigned to other billets even though on the first screen they had been selected for consideration for a

*For carrier squadrons only.

OPERATIONAL
POINTS



Example illustrated:

Operational Score = 1200

Performance Score = 33

Final Score = 235

Fig. 5 -- MIXING CURVE BLENDING PERFORMANCE AND EXPERIENCE -
used by officer personnel detailers during process of selecting
prospective commanding officers of fleet aviation commands.

command billet. The detail officer then proceeds to match the available commands with those officers who have been screened out and are on the "command list." If it becomes impossible to assign an officer a command who is on the "command list," the detailee will attempt to assign him a billet in order of preference that is aligned to his career needs to (a) a ship, (b) a staff, (c) an overseas activity or (d) a joint or combined staff.

Aviation Command Opportunity

In the selection of an officer to an aviation command billet, the detailee is limited to a specific time schedule in which an officer is considered eligible. This schedule is illustrated in Fig. 6 and shows the specific periods when each year group is eligible for consideration. For example, year groups 43-2, 44-1, 44-2, 44-3, 45-1, and 45-2 are all eligible for command billets in 1961. During the middle of 1961 officers in year group 43-2 will end their eligibility, and officers of year group 45-2 will commence their eligibility. The total period of eligibility is five years, and at any time during this period a command assignment can be made; an assignment lasts from one to two years.

The rate of rotation of commanding officers is about 124 a year. Keen competition is the simple conclusion that can be derived on examination of the number of commanders in the year groups that are eligible who will be competing for one of the 124 assignments when it is realized that approximately 47 per cent of the commanders are on sea duty, and a command

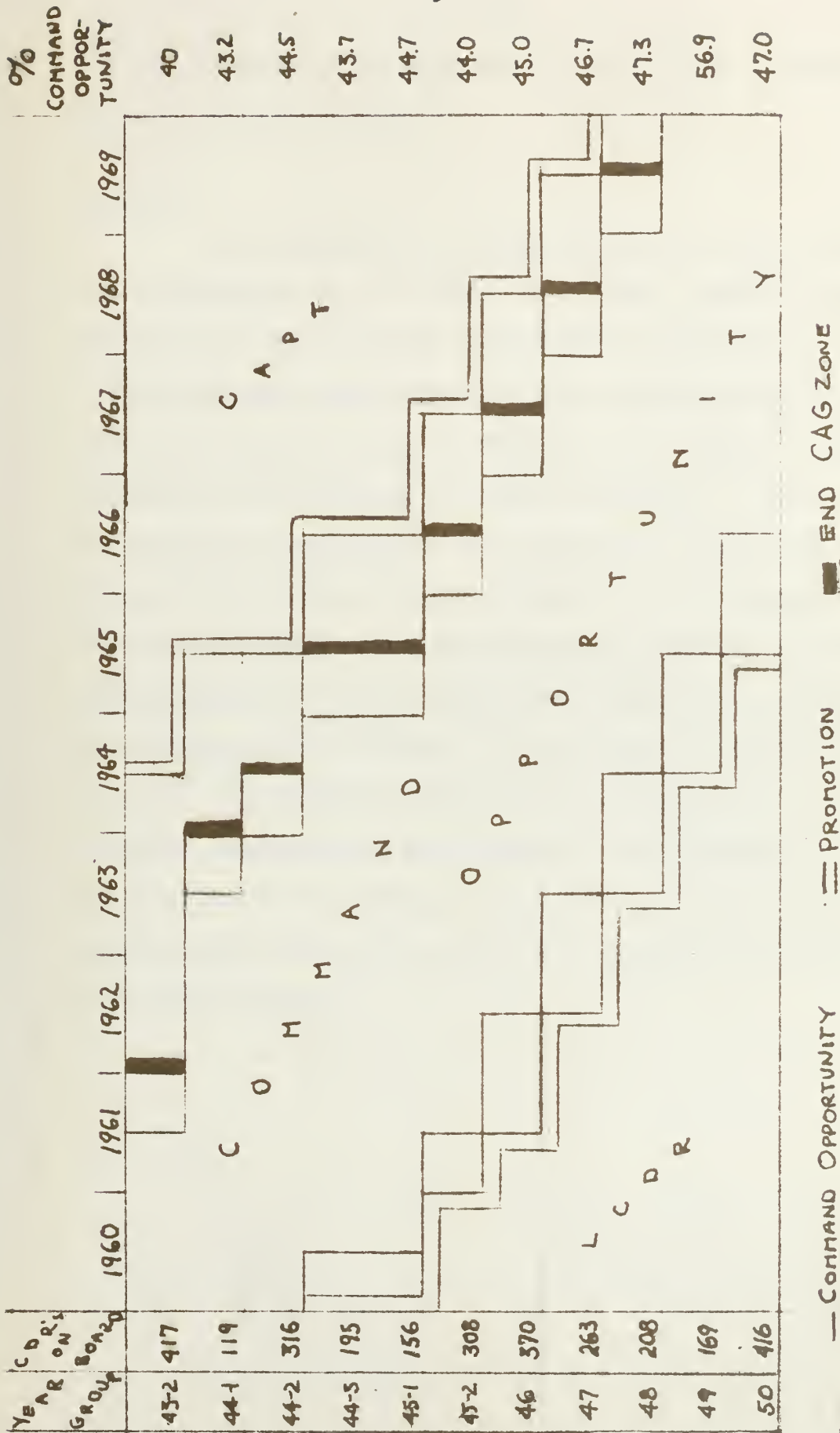


FIG. 6-- AVIATION COMMAND OPPORTUNITY

billet represents a highlight in an officer's career pattern that is eagerly sought.

Summary

The procedures that are currently used in the selection and assignment of an aviator to a fleet aviation command as commanding officer involve the close coordinated and combined efforts of the officer concerned, the Grade Assignment Branch, and the Officer Placement Branch of the Officer Distribution Division of the Bureau of Naval Personnel. Prior to selection, an intensive examination is made of the performance and experience of the officer being considered. His record and reports that he has submitted are personally reviewed and screened; and after screening, he is ranked with all other contemporaries who are scheduled for orders. On the basis of ranked position, he is or is not further considered as a prospective commanding officer. Throughout the process, consideration is given to insure that to the extent possible the needs of the service are matched with the career needs and personal desires of each individual officer.

CHAPTER V

FITNESS REPORTS

The two basic criteria that are used in the selection of officers as commanding officers of fleet aviation commands are (1) operational experience and (2) performance. Evaluation of operational experience is relatively simple and objective since the elements that are considered can be finitely described, i.e., the number of flight hours, the number of jet hours, the number of carrier landings, the number of months in squadrons/ships, the type of instrument card, etc. Evaluating performance, as will be seen in the light of the following comments, is an entirely different matter.

An officer's performance is regularly evaluated and reported semiannually by a reporting senior, who in most cases is his commanding officer. The "Report on the Fitness of Officers" is probably the most important single document in an officer's record because it is the primary instrument used by selection boards for promotion, selection, and assignment of officers.¹

Ever since 1825 the Navy has required that evaluation reports be submitted on naval officers.² Through the years

¹U. S. Department of the Navy, BUPERS Instruction 1611.5 of 16 April 1954.

²U. S. Department of the Navy, BUPERS, Research Report

many changes have been made in the format of fitness reports. Since World War II there have been three complete revisions reflecting changing ideas as to what are the individual elements that can be judged which will constitute a valid appraisal of an officer's performance and potential.

Fitness reports have always been a controversial subject and perhaps always will be, essentially, because of the individual differences of people and, secondly, because the evaluations reported are personal value judgments which lack finiteness, complete objectivity, and perhaps even validity to some degree. One writer who has had much experience with fitness reports writes:

One theory of personnel evaluation states that rater judgments are a combination of three factors:

- (1) The true performance of the person being rated;
- (2) The superior's perception of that performance which implies positive or negative bias due to temperament, emotion, and stress; and
- (3) A time lapse between performance and the rating which distorts the superior's memory of the event.³

Another informed writer presents this point of view:

It has been suggested that something be done about standardizing the marking of fitness reports. Anyone who has examined fitness reports in quantity knows what two different naval officers can do to fitness reports is positively unbelievable. . . . Our fitness reports form itself needs few if any changes. But our standard of marking need overhauling.⁴

56-2, History of the Officer Fitness Report, NAVPERS 18494, U. S. Naval Personnel Research Field Activity, Washington, D. C., April 1956, p. 2.

³Ray C. Needham, RADM USN, "Officer Evaluation and Promotion," United States Naval Institute Proceedings, March 1960, p. 61.

⁴L. S. Sabin, VADM USN, "Deep Selections," United States Naval Institute Proceedings, March 1960, pp. 53-4.

An authoritative study categorizes the marking standards employed by different reporting seniors as:

- a. The hard marker who accepts the standards as defined on the Fitness Report.
- b. The conscientious middle group of markers who are trying to guess the statistical norms which in fact do not agree with standards as defined on the Fitness Report.
- c. The easy markers. Frequently these are converted hard markers who have become disillusioned with the system.⁵

The following remarks further illustrate the limitations of the present form of the fitness report:

. . . Possibly the good faith of the reporting seniors who accepted the norms as defined could have encouraged other reporting seniors to also accept the defined marking standards if it had not been for the "hump" problem.⁶

. . . It has been observed in one study that junior officers assigned to destroyers in the Pacific are more apt to receive lower marks than junior officers assigned to destroyers in the Atlantic.⁷

. . . It is generally accepted that all of us are guilty of overmarking. Probably none of us like it, but the establishment of inflated standards requires one to go along with the inflation lest perchance he injure a thoroughly capable officer.⁸

The recent remarks of Admiral Burke, the Chief of Naval Operations, commenting on officer selection, offer an

⁵U. S. Department of the Navy, OPNAV/BUPERS, Desirability and Criteria for Early Promotion of Naval Officers. Report of a study by the OPNAV/BUPERS Personnel Monitoring Group, December 1958, p. 42.

⁶Ibid., p. 43.

⁷Ibid., p. 44.

⁸Sabin, op. cit., p. 54.

additional view of the limitation of fitness reports.

There is no system, particularly no mechanical system, which will insure the selection of the very best people. There is even no way of measuring accurately the many factors which go into making up the qualifications for Naval officers. We try, over many years, to get a judgment on people by fitness reports. These fitness reports are a measure, but they, too, are not without error. They are made by men, men who have human frailties, men whose judgments are not always alike.⁹

The foregoing remarks are indicative of the concern of informed persons as they raise the question of the accuracy, validity, and limitations of the fitness report and the extent to which it can be used in the fine discriminations between officers. That is to say, if an evaluation were made of 100 officers, the top ten could probably be readily identifiable as would be the lowest ten; but is it possible to differentiate between the fiftieth officer and the sixtieth officer, or even between the fortieth and sixtieth officer? There are now strong indications that a disintegration of marking standards may be occurring as more and more of the conscientious markers shift their marking standards upward.¹⁰ The net result of this trend is that it is becoming increasingly difficult for any selection board to make an objective selection on the basis of reported performance because of the variabilities that are present and the lack of specific controls or standardization in the marking process.

⁹Burke, op. cit., p. 1.

¹⁰OPNAV/BUPERS Personnel Monitoring Group, op. cit., p. 43.

CHAPTER VI

IMPLICATIONS, SUMMARY, AND CONCLUSIONS

The many implications that can be drawn from this paper on the problems and procedures of detailers in their selection of aviators to command billets is dependent on the astuteness of the reader and only the more obvious implications will be highlighted. The effects of the selection process are linked to the future and only through the passage of time will the validity of the processes be confirmed or refuted.

Preselection

Perhaps the most significant implication is that selection for a command billet amounts to preselection for promotion or at least materially enhances promotional potential. Both the selection process for promotion and for command assignment rely basically on the same data contained in the fitness report. A review of the statistical records of recent selection boards supports this premise in reflecting a higher promotion rate for those officers who had command experience than those who did not. It has been emphatically stated that the basic criteria for promotion to higher grades in a military organization were performance in command and a diversified

career pattern.¹

Selection boards for promotion are composed of successful competent officers, senior to those being considered who are carefully chosen as being qualified by reasons of experience and background.² It would be safe to assume that most, if not all, of the naval aviators sitting on a selection board had in the past served as commanding officers of fleet aviation units in view of their excellent command opportunity and that the other unrestricted line officers sitting on the board also had had command experience. There is little doubt that different selection boards use different criteria in the selection of senior officers for promotion, and the composition of the board generally reflects the type of officer who will be selected. It is only natural that selection boards will select officers possessing characteristics and career patterns considered desirable by the collective judgment and past experience of the board members.³

Morale

What is the effect of the command selection process on the officer who does not make the "command" list? The answer may very well be, "None,--for some officers." On the other hand there are those who may feel rejected, hurt, disillusioned, and perhaps demoralized. Can these officers continue to give

¹OPNAV/BUPERS Personnel Monitoring Group, op. cit., p. 111.

²Burke, op. cit., p. 2.

³OPNAV/BUPERS Personnel Monitoring Group, op. cit., p. 111.

unstinting and loyal service, or will their morale be affected so as to prejudice their performance during the remainder of their service tenure? Admiral Sabin's views are:

No military service ever faces a problem more serious than one which involves morale. Senior officers set the pace for morale. If the morale of a group of senior officers is not good, the effects will soon be felt by juniors.⁴

Therefore, command selection could create a cleavage between those officers selected and those who are not; in effect, those considered on the first team and those considered on the second team. Is it unreasonable to expect varsity performance and morale from the second team if such a cleavage develops?

Post Graduate Education

Another implication is that knowledge of the command selection process may tend to deter unrestricted line officers from seeking post graduate work in a technical specialty. It appears obvious that an officer will not willingly jeopardize his selection potential by attending a post graduate course to acquire a specialty while his contemporaries are assigned to duties that appear to have a more favorable significance. This situation places both the Navy and the individual in a dilemma since (1) the Navy desires to have unrestricted line officers with a technical specialty, and (2) both the Navy and the individual may be penalized if the resultant gap in the record and the specialization after completion of school lessen selection opportunity.⁵

⁴Sabin, op. cit., p. 5.

⁵OPNAV/BUPERS Personnel Monitoring Group, op. cit., p. 118.

There is evidence that some promotion selection boards have weighed the educational achievements of selectees as there is a significant correlation between educational attainment and selection. The FY 1960 Commander selection results were:

<u>Educational Degrees</u>	<u>No. Officers</u>	<u>No. Promoted</u>	<u>% Promoted</u>
Master	99	86	86.8
Bachelor + Some P.G.	49	34	69.3
Bachelor	349	218	62.4
Below Bachelor	512	196	38.2 ⁶

Will this correlation exist in the Captain selection results in the future particularly in view of the decreased command opportunity?

Attrited Officers

What of the passed over commander who is continued on active duty beyond his second failure? Obviously they are capable officers who in normal situations certainly would have been promoted to captain.⁷ Up to the day of their pass-over, they were eligible for assignment to any billet; this is no longer true after the promotion results are promulgated. Why? Certainly they are just as capable after selection as before. The stigma of reduced status that might have been attached to a passed-over officer in the past is not rightfully placed upon

⁶Burke, op. cit., p. 2.

⁷H. P. Smith, Vice Admiral, USN, Memorandum To All Naval Officers, U. S. Dept. of the Navy, The Chief of Naval Personnel, 12 August 1959.

either the continued officer, or in many cases, many of the current pass-overs. They are victims of circumstances beyond their control. There therefore appears to be a need for recognition of the intrinsic values of these officers and a re-orientation of their acceptance to any billet that is commensurate with their individual abilities and experiences.

Fitness Reports

Still another implication is that the fitness reports need to be revised or improved with emphasis on control features that will encourage reporting seniors to utilize similar marking standards and thereby achieve more valid and discriminatory marks.⁸ The last complete revision was made in 1954, and when it was adopted it provided the necessary discrimination. Today it does not. Since fitness reports are of such extreme importance in selection, their continued use becomes questionable unless they possess a discriminatory ability. Lacking discrimination, it may well be that an officer's duty pattern in the future will become more significant than his performance.

Command Board

Finally, the decision to assign an officer to an aviation command billet lies primarily in the hands of just two detailers at the present time. Theirs is a heavy responsibility, and though the detailers are competent, sincere, and wise in experience, their small numbers work to their disadvantage. Various pressures could be reduced if detailers were relieved

⁸OPNAV/BUPERS Personnel Monitoring Group, op. cit., p. 47.

of this particular decision, and the responsibility was assigned to a board of senior aviators to make selections for command billets.

Summary

The selection of an officer for a fleet aviation command billet today presents an exacting personnel management problem for officer detailers. A procedure has been developed and is currently being used that utilizes present existent records and reports. This procedure not only continues the philosophy of wedding the needs of the service, the career needs of the individual, and the individual's desires but also considers and weighs the past experience and performance of the individual.

Because of the imbalance between the number of officers eligible for command and the number of commands that are available, an orderly and workable procedure has been devised that leads to the selection of those officers whose records indicate the highest potential. Selection of an aviator to a command billet has developed into a highly competitive process which is particularly significant because of the relationship between command and promotion potential and the psychological impact on both those selected and those who are not. Selection represents the fruition of many years of hard work and preparation and implies an enhanced position for continued promotion. Non selection could result in a serious morale problem.

The procedures currently used insures that each officer's records are individually considered prior to an assignment. When an officer has been tentatively designated for

a command billet, his past experience and performance are evaluated and plotted on a mixing curve. His score is compared with all other officers who have also been designated. Only those officers whose scores rank in the upper portion of the ranked distribution list are assigned command billets.

Conclusion

The command selection process appears to be as equitable and as objective as it can be in the light of the limitation of the discriminatory ability of fitness reports to accurately report performance. At present the only reported judgment of an officer's performance is the fitness report. It is obvious that detailers will continue to use fitness reports despite their present discriminatory limitations until some better method of judging performance can be devised.

Without doubt, command assignments will continue to maintain their position of desirability and importance in the career pattern of unrestricted line officers both for the individual's and the Navy's viewpoint. There therefore appears to be an obvious requirement for an evaluative report with discriminatory ability that is specifically designed to identify officers who possess outstanding potential as future commanding officers. It would appear that the proper time for making such a report would be only when an officer is serving in a squadron, and after he had achieved enough seniority to assume a responsible position in the squadron organization so that his potential could be clearly demonstrated. A by-product of a report of this nature, intentional or otherwise, could result

in higher performance of officers being evaluated because of greater motivation through recognition.

In the final analysis, aviation command opportunity is projected to be between 45 and 50 per cent. If it is suspected that the present methods used in command selection are not definitive enough to select the top 50 per cent, then it seems advisable that a new method be adopted whose definitive ability would emphasize the evaluation of specific skills required for the billet of commanding officer.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Public Documents

- U. S. Congress, Improved Opportunity for Promotion and Retention for Certain Naval Officers, Public Law 86-155
86th Congress, H. R. 4413, Aug. 11, 1951.
- U. S. Congress, Officer Personnel Act 1947, Public Law 381,
80th Congress, H. R. 3830, Aug. 7, 1947.

Articles and Periodicals

- Burke, Arleigh, Admiral USN, "News and Views," CNO Shop Talk,
U. S. Dept. of the Navy, Office of the Chief of
Naval Operations, dated 28 March 1960.
- Kidd, I. C. Cdr. USN, "The Naval Officer's Fitness Report,"
U. S. Naval Institute Proceedings, March 1957.
- Mack, William P. Capt. USN, "The Exercise of Broad Command:
Still the Navy's Top Speciality," United States Naval
Institute Proceedings, April 1957.
- Needham, Ray C. Rear Admiral USN, "Officer Evaluation and
Promotion," United States Naval Institute Proceedings,
March 1960.
- Porter, Howard E., Lt. Col., USA, "An Analysis of Officer
Career Management in the Armed Forces," (Thesis No. 102,
Industrial College of the Armed Forces, Washington, D. C.,
1956-1957).
- Sabin, L. S. Vice Admiral, USN, "Deep Selections," United
States Naval Institute Proceedings, March 1960.
- Zunwalt, E. R. Jr., Cdr., USN, "Beyond the Hump," United
States Naval Institute Proceedings, July 1959.

Military Directives and Instructions

- U. S. Department of the Navy. BUPERS Instruction 1611.5 of 16 April 1954.
- U. S. Department of the Navy. BUPERS Line Officer Personnel Newsletter, NAVPERS 15892, Vol. I, No. 3, Feb. 1957.
- U. S. Department of the Navy. BUPERS Line Officer Personnel Newsletter, NAVPERS 15892, Vol. 3, No. 2, January 1960.
- U. S. Department of the Navy. BUPERS Line Officer Personnel Newsletter, NAVPERS 15892, July 1959.
- U. S. Department of the Navy. BUPERS Line Officer Personnel Newsletter, NAVPERS 15892, Vol. III, No. 1, October 1959.
- U. S. Department of the Navy. BUPERS Notice 1412 of 23 March 1960.
- U. S. Department of the Navy. BUPERS Officer's Appraisal Pamphlet for Surface Line Officers of 1 October 1955.
- U. S. Department of the Navy. BUPERS Research Report 56-2, History of Officer Fitness Report, Nav. Pers 18494, U. S. Naval Research Field Activity, Washington, D. C., April 1956.
- U. S. Department of the Navy. BUPERS To All Naval Officers, 12 August 1959.
- U. S. Department of the Navy. OPNAV/BUPERS, Desirability and Criteria for Early Promotion of Naval Officers, OPNAV/BUPERS Personnel Monitoring Group, December 1958.

Personal Interviews

Officer Distribution Division (Pers B1)

Captain E. H. English, USN.
 Commander J. M. Tulley, USN.
 Commander J. Ferris, USN.
 Commander A. E. Dewachter, USN.
 Commander F. C. Turner, USN.

Officer Selection Research Section (Pers 1521)

Mr. J. Cowan

